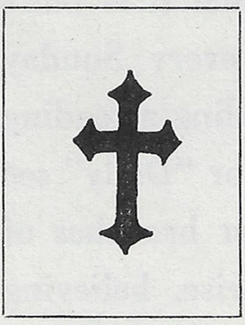

Sunday Morning Worship and Daily Morning Prayer

By EDWARD N. PERKINS

A NATIONAL GUILD OF CHURCHMEN TRACT

SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP AND DAILY MORNING PRAYER

In the Anglican Communion it is very generally believed and practiced, that the precept that it is one's duty to worship God in His Church every Sunday (P. B. p. 291) is complied with by attending a reading of the office of Daily Morning Prayer (for "Daily" see P. B. p. 3) followed by a sermon. Other branches of the Holy Catholic Church think otherwise, believing that Eucharistic worship is meant. The Roman Catholic will say he is to "hear Mass" every Sunday, the Orthodox that he is to be present at the Holy Liturgy.

Recently quite a flurry was created by the discontinuance in a certain cathedral church of the long-established Sunday practice of the eleven o'clock office of Daily Morning Prayer followed by a sermon, in favor of a celebration of the Holy Communion (the Mass of the Roman Catholic and the Holy Liturgy of the Orthodox) with a sermon just before the Offertory, as authorized by the rubric (P. B. p. 71). At the cathedral of an adjacent diocese that already had been the practice for years, as it has in many parish churches.

The practice of the Episcopal Church is divided, and this difference amongst ourselves is coming to be more widely noticed. It is something which Episcopalians should be thinking about. Uniformity of practice arrived at through common understanding is a state which we should hope for.

Those who disapprove of the Sunday morning practice of Daily Morning Prayer and sermon, do so not because of what is done, but of what is not done. They are happy to have as many as will, attend the Daily Morning Prayer every Sunday. Their objection is to *not* attending a celebration of the Holy Eucharist every

Sunday. Those of the opposite way of thinking claim that this relative neglect of the Eucharist is right and preferable.

One thing perhaps may be very generally agreed upon, and that is that many Episcopalians have only the vaguest idea of what the liturgy of the Holy Communion is all about. And how is one in such a state to form a worth-while opinion about anything relating to the service? As a test, to how many Episcopalians does the expression "Eucharistic Sacrifice" mean anything in particular? Or: What is the significance of the word "Eucharist"? The clergy all too often assure their people that the Holy Communion is "The great central act of Christian worship," without making the least attempt to tell them how or why or even acting as if they believed it themselves. One consequence is that many Episcopalians have the idea that there is nothing for them to do at a celebration of the Holy Communion unless they intend to receive the Sacrament. Yet there is much for them to do.

The Liturgical Commission of the Episcopal Church has put forward a tentative revision of the Holy Communion, proposing, among other things, to give the service this title: "Celebration of the Holy Eucharist and Administration of the Holy Communion," thus by naming Eucharist curing the defect of the present title which seems to say that Communion is all. Yet there is still more besides Communion than Eucharist. There is sacrifice.

In their reply to the denial on the part of Pope Leo XIII of the validity of the Anglican orders, which had charged that the Holy Communion is a "nude commemoration of the Sacrifice of the Cross," the English Archbishops said:

". . . We continue a perpetual memory of the precious death of Christ, who is our advocate with the Father

and the Propitiation for our sins, according to His precept, until His coming again. For first we offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; then next we plead and represent before the Father the Sacrifice of the Cross, and by it we confidently entreat remission of sins and all other benefits of the Lord's Passion for the whole Church; and lastly we offer the sacrifice of ourselves to the Creator of all things which we have already signified by the oblation of His creatures. This whole action, in which the people has necessarily to take its part with the Priest, we are accustomed to call the Eucharistic Sacrifice."

In the same document the Archbishops speak of "the relation which unites the sacrifice of the eternal Priest and the sacrifice of the Church, which in some way certainly are one."

One should disabuse one's mind of some common misunderstandings about sacrifice. Connotations which have clustered about the word grow out of the practice both of the Jews and of the pagans in ancient times to offer living creatures on the altar, taking their lives, to say nothing of the human sacrifices of the pagans of Asia. It is an easy but wrong inference that such immolation is of the essence of sacrifice. This confusion, carried over mentally into the idea of our Lord's self-offering at Calvary, sets up a repulsion against sacrifice in connection with the Holy Communion.

"Sacrifice" is *sacer* + *facere*, to make sacred. Whatever is offered to and accepted by God is a sacrifice. In the old Mediterranean World sacrifices of first fruits were familiar, and even of flowers. The altar is the place of sacrifice and whatever is formally offered to God is brought to the altar, a sacrifice.

The Eucharist is a great dramatic act of praise and thanksgiving and of sacrifice centering on our Lord's sacrificial life and His final self-offering at Calvary and

culminating in the act of Holy Communion. Eucharist is thanksgiving. The Eucharist is characterized by praise and thanksgiving, and so the Eucharistic Sacrifice is a "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" (P. B. p. 81). In the celebration of the Holy Communion, at the Offertory, the bread and wine, our gifts which are to be consecrated to be the Body and Blood of Christ, are first offered to God (P. B. p. 73, rubric). Then at the Consecration the sacramental Body and Blood are offered ("these thy holy gifts which we now offer unto thee" — P. B. p. 80) thus in this memorial re-presenting to the Father the Sacrifice of Calvary offered once for all on the Cross and pleading its merits. Throughout we offer our prayers and praise, and our thanksgivings. We offer also ourselves, our souls and bodies, unworthy as we are, to be a sacrifice to almighty God, through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ (P. B. p. 81). In all this we are alert to assign all glory to almighty God who gave His only Son to suffer death upon the Cross, "who made there by his one oblation of himself once offered a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world," and in contrition and self-surrender, and in thankfulness, we recall in dramatic reenactment His institution of the Blessed Sacrament in the night in which He was betrayed (P. B. p. 80).

It is submitted that anyone who will attend and follow carefully a celebration of the Holy Communion and keep his mind alert to all these things will find plenty to do there apart from the act of communion, far more, indeed, than the office of Daily Morning Prayer affords. Attendance at the Holy Communion is worship at its highest, the offering to the Father of the perfect offering of the Son. In the familiar words of the hymn (189): ". . . having with us him who pleads above, we here present, we here spread forth to thee the only offering perfect in thine eyes, the one true, pure, immortal sacrifice."

It is the teaching of the Church that the Lord is present on His altar in the Holy Communion. Those many Episcopalians who on "Communion Sunday" get up and leave at the Offertory, seem to be walking out on our Lord just as He is about to come. Should they not await the Lord's coming, on their knees? And what of those who remain half squatted on their haunches, with knees too stiff to bend for Him at whose name every knee should bow, or so St. Paul thought? There is plenty to do apart from the act of Communion, if one will but do it.

The offices of Daily Morning Prayer (P. B. p. 3) and Daily Evening Prayer (P. B. p. 21), represent the Divine Office of daily praise and thanksgiving and are supposed to be said in the churches daily, weekdays and Sundays, whether there is a congregation of one or more, or not. It is easy to prove by the Prayer Book that it contemplates that the Holy Communion is to be the Sunday service regularly attended by everybody. And this sets one to wondering how it came about that in practice the Eucharist has been so widely displaced as the generally attended Sunday service, by Daily Morning Prayer.

Perhaps it is quite generally assumed that this displacement is one of the purposeful changes of the Reformation. But that is not the case. The displacement came not by design, but through the accidental combination of circumstances. The division in practice developed when, in consequence of the Oxford Movement, a process of replacement began.

The displacement of the Eucharist as the universally attended Sunday service grew out of a rubric in the English Prayer Book forbidding consecration unless there were to be three or more communicants who had given their names in to the priest by the previous evening. Some very general account of this matter is given

in "The Worship of the Church" prepared, and published in 1952 by The Seabury Press, Inc., under the direction of the National Council of the Episcopal Church (See pp. 147-149). In the late Middle Age lay communions were few and far between both on the Continent of Europe and in England, and most celebrations were completed with the priest alone communicating. Either this communion of the priest alone was regarded as in itself objectionable, or it was thought that if it were forbidden an effort would be made and more communicants led to be prepared. In either case, communicants did not come forward, and the result was to prevent the priest from proceeding beyond the part of the service called "Ante-communion," except on great feast days when enough communicants were on hand.

In consequence of this prohibiting rubric, the Anglican order of Sunday Service came to be Daily Morning Prayer, the Litany, and "Ante-communion" with a sermon. In the course of time this was abbreviated to Daily Morning Prayer and Sermon. Thus by that rubric the Eucharist was unintentionally displaced as the universally attended Sunday service, a result which nobody desired (For a detailed account of this, see "Sunday Morning — which Service?", a tract by the Rev. Dr. N. B. Williams, late of Oxford, published by the S. P. C. K. *Cir.* 1943).

Those intent on restoring the Eucharist to its lost position perhaps would say, if asked for their reason, that it is indeed the great act of worship, the memorial of the Lord's passion and death and resurrection, the re-presentation to the Father of Christ's atoning Sacrifice and His perpetual intercession for us sinners, the service in which He is indeed spiritually present, and the Sacrament of His Body and Blood; and furthermore that to attend it every Sunday at least whether receiving the Sacrament or not is no mere Roman precept, but

incontrovertibly the practice and precept of the whole Church from the beginning.

Grounds for objecting to the restoration of the Eucharist are less easy to state. Most people are strongly averse to alteration of settled habits in such matters as religious observance. There may also be some prejudice resulting from the inveterate habit in some quarters of misrepresenting "High Church" or "Anglo-Catholic." There may be some who dislike to be confronted by conviction of sin or call to humility, and some perhaps who wish to approximate as nearly as may be Protestant ways, in the hope that the Episcopal Church may one day give itself over to some Protestant sect or other. Probably mere adherence to settled habit, a strong motive, is the main reason, together with quite general lack of understanding of the Holy Eucharist as a service of worship, praise, thanksgiving, and self-surrender.

The division in our Church with respect to this most important matter of practice is worse than merely deplorable. What every Episcopalian can do is to try to inform himself, as by studying "The Worship of the Church" cited above, and to think it out in his own mind as open-mindedly as he can contrive to do, seeking the truth.

The scheme of parish worship contemplated by the Prayer Book is summarized thus in "The Worship of the Church" (pp. 149, 150):

". . . This would entail Morning and Evening Prayer daily, including Sundays, frequent use of the Litany, and a celebration of the Holy Communion, with proper preparation for it, at least every Sunday and holy day, not merely as an 'extra' service, but as part of the regular corporate life of the whole parish. Such a discipline of worship would not mean necessarily that every lay person would make his or her communion at every celebration. . . ."

For fifteen hundred years at least no such thing existed in the Christian world as a generally attended Sunday service other than the Holy Eucharist. This never meant that everyone present is to receive the Sacrament. That is for those who are prepared and desirous. Those not prepared, or not desirous to receive, remain in their places. They have come to offer their prayers and thanksgivings and to take their part as members of the body in the Sacrifice of the Church which, as the Archbishops say in their reply to Pope Leo, is in some way certainly one with the Sacrifice of the eternal Priest.

HYMN 189

(Stanzas 1 and 2)

And now, O Father, mindful of the love
That bought us, once for all, on Calvary's tree,
And having with us him that pleads above,
We here present, we here spread forth to thee,
That only offering perfect in thine eyes,
The one true, pure, immortal sacrifice.

Look, Father, look on his anointed face,
And only look on us as found in him;
Look not on our misusings of thy grace,
Our prayer so languid, and our faith so dim;
For lo! between our sins and their reward,
We set the passion of thy Son our Lord.

The National Guild of Churchmen

is an incorporated non-profit association of Episcopalians organized to maintain, defend and propagate the historic doctrine, practice and teaching of the Anglican Communion as held by the Episcopal Church and contained in the Book of Common Prayer.

Believing it is the duty of every member of the Episcopal Church to know the fundamental truths of the "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" the Guild has distributed more than 600,000 teaching tracts to over 125,000 communicants of the Church throughout the country.

A free copy of each available tract listed below will be mailed to anyone upon request.

Communities of Religious
Ministry and Authority
Penance in the Prayer Book
Who and What Are We Episcopalians?
A Convert Speaks
Sunday Morning Worship and
Daily Morning Prayer

Additional copies will be sent postage prepaid at the following rates: 25 copies $1.00; 100 copies $3.00.

Every communicant has an opportunity to help make this work more effective for Christ and His Church.

You can pray for God's blessing on our efforts.

You can send us names and addresses of Episcopalians.

You can enroll as a member. Dues $2 per year.

You can encourage others to become interested.

We pray you will.

NATIONAL GUILD OF CHURCHMEN, INC.
145 West 46th Street
New York 36, N. Y.

PLEASE PRINT NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF EPISCOPALIANS FOR OUR MAILING LIST

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

National Guild of Churchmen, Inc.
145 West 46th Street
New York 36, N. Y.

Date_____

Please enroll me as a member of the National Guild of Churchmen. Enclosed is two dollars payment of dues for one year, also a special contribution of_____Dollars.

*Name*_____

*Address*_____

*City*_____

*Parish*_____

PLEASE PRINT

Special contributions are earnestly solicited to extend the work of the Guild. Please make checks payable to the National Guild of Churchmen, Inc.

7